

# The Pope's requests for forgiveness (wording)

## The Church asks God for forgiveness

Holy Father  
John Paul II

on the seven requests for forgiveness

[March 12, 2000](#)

On Sunday, March 12, 2000, Pope John Paul II asked for forgiveness in a historically unique gesture for the mistakes of CHRISTIANS in the 2000-year history of the Church in St. Peter's Basilica .

(Source: [http://alt.nuntiaturn.de/VaticanEXPO/EXPOFiles/EXPO\\_VATICAN\\_DE/Dokumente/G\\_Frieden/Mea\\_Culpa.doc](http://alt.nuntiaturn.de/VaticanEXPO/EXPOFiles/EXPO_VATICAN_DE/Dokumente/G_Frieden/Mea_Culpa.doc) )

**General note:** *What to consider when reading text articles of the teaching texts*

### Pope John Paul II .:

Dear brothers and sisters, let us confidently call to God our Father, who is merciful and long-suffering, rich in mercy, love and faithfulness. May he accept the repentance of his people, who humbly confess their guilt, and give him his mercy.

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## I. General admission of guilt

### Cardinal Bernardin Gantin :

Let our confession and repentance be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Our pain is honest and deep. And if we humbly consider the guilt of the past and honestly cleanse our memory, then lead us on the path to real repentance.

### Pope John Paul II :

Lord our God, you keep sanctifying your church on your way through time in the blood of your son. At all times you know in her lap limbs that shine through their holiness, but also others that disobey you and that contradict the creed and the holy gospel. You stay loyal, even if we become unfaithful. Forgive us our guilt and let us be true witnesses to you among people. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

## II. Confession of guilt in the service of truth

### Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger :

Let each of us realize that, in the name of faith and morality, people in the Church, in their necessary efforts to protect the truth, have sometimes resorted to methods that do not conform to the gospel. Help us imitate Jesus Christ, who is mild and humble from the heart.

### Pope John Paul II .:

Lord, you are the god of all people. In some times in history, Christians have allowed methods of intolerance. By not following the great commandment of love, they have disfigured the face of the Church, your bride. Have mercy on your

sinful children and accept our resolution to serve the truth in the mildness of love and to remain aware that the truth can only assert itself with the power of truth. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

### III. Confession of sins against the unity of the body of Christ

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**Cardinal Roger Etchegaray :**

Let the admission of sins that have wounded the unity of the body of Christ and violated fraternal love pave the way for reconciliation and fellowship among all Christians.

**Pope John Paul II .:**

Merciful father, the evening before his suffering your son asked that the believers in him be one: but they did not comply with his will. They have created opposites and divisions. They have condemned and fought each other. We call on your mercy and ask you for a repentant heart so that all Christians can reconcile you and each other. Unified in one body and one spirit, they should be able to relive the joy of full community. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

== IV. Confession of guilt in relation to Israel

**Cardinal Edward Idris Cassidy:**

Let the Christians remember the sufferings that have been inflicted on the people of Israel in history. Let them acknowledge their sins, which not a few of them have committed against the people of the covenant and the beatitudes, and thus purify their hearts.

**Pope John Paul II .:**

God our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to carry your name to the people. We are deeply saddened by the behavior of everyone who has made your sons and daughters suffer throughout history. We beg your pardon and want to ensure that genuine fraternity prevails with the people of the federal government. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

### V. Confession of guilt for the misconduct against love, peace, the rights of peoples, respect for cultures and religions

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**Archbishop Stefan Fumio Hamao:**

Let the Christians look at Jesus, who is our Lord and our peace. Grant that they can regret what they have been missing in words and deeds. Sometimes they have been guided by pride and hatred, the will to rule others, hostility to the followers of other religions and social groups that were weaker than them, such as immigrants and gypsies.

**The Holy Father:**

Lord of the world, father of all people, through your son you asked us to love the enemy, to do good to those who hate us and to pray for those who persecute us. However, Christians have often denied the gospel and given in to the logic of violence. They have violated the rights of tribes and peoples, whose cultures and religious traditions have been despised: Show us your patience and mercy! Forgive us We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

### VI. Confession of sins against the dignity of women and the unity of the human race

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**Cardinal Francis Arinze :**

Let us pray for all who have been violated in human dignity and whose rights have been suppressed. Let us pray for women who are too often humiliated and marginalized. We admit that Christians, too, are guilty of some kind in order to make people compliant.

**The Holy Father:**

Lord our god, you are our father. You created man as a man and woman, in your image and likeness. You wanted the diversity of the peoples in the unity of the human family. But sometimes your children's dignity was not recognized. Christians have also been guilty of marginalizing people and denying them access. They have allowed discrimination based on different race and skin color. Forgive us and grant us the grace to heal the wounds that are still inherent in your community because of sin, so that we can all feel like your sons and daughters. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

### VII. Confession of sins in the field of fundamental rights of the person

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**Archbishop François Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan :**

Let us pray for all people on earth, especially for the minors who have been abused, for the poor, the marginalized and the last. Let us pray for those who enjoy the least protection, for the unborn children who are killed in the womb, or for those who are used for research purposes by those who have abused them with the opportunities offered by biotechnology. This is how they distorted the goals of science.

**Pope John Paul II .:**

God our father, you always listen to the cry of the poor. How often did the Christians not recognize you in the hungry, thirsty and naked, in the persecuted and prisoners, in the vulnerable who were just handed over at the beginning of their existence. We ask forgiveness for all those who have wronged themselves by relying on wealth and power and contemptuously punishing the "little ones" who are so dear to your heart. Have mercy on us and accept our repentance. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

(A light is lit in front of the crucifix.)

## closing prayer

**Pope John Paul II .:**

Merciful Father, your son Jesus Christ, the judge of the living and the dead, has liberated mankind from sin in the lowliness of his first coming. When he comes back in glory, he will call to account for all guilt from our fathers, from our brothers and sisters and from us, your servants. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we return to you with a repentant heart. Give us your mercy and forgiveness of sins. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

## HOLY FAIR ON THE DAY OF AWARDDING IN HOLY 2000

Sermon by John Paul II

Sunday March 12, 2000

(Source: Pope Sermon on March 12, 2000 )

1. »Instead of Christ, we ask: be reconciled to God! He made the one who knew no sin into sin for us, so that we could become God's righteousness in him «(2 Cor 5: 20-21).

These are words of St. Paul. The Church brings them back to consciousness every year at the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday. During Lent, the Church wants to unite with Christ in a special way. Christ, driven by the Holy Spirit, took on his mission as the Messiah and went to the desert, where he fasted for forty days and forty nights (cf. Mk 1: 12-13).

At the end of this fast, he is tempted by Satan, as evangelist Mark notes in today's liturgy (cf. Mk 1.13), while Matthew and Luke deal more closely with Christ's struggle in the desert and his ultimate victory over the tempter : »Away with you, Satan! For the scripture says: Before the Lord your God you shall prostrate yourself and serve him alone "(Mt 4:10).

He who speaks like this is "who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21), Jesus, "the holy of God" (Mk 1:24).

2. "He made the one who knew no sin to sin for us so that we might become God's righteousness" (2 Cor 5:21). We have just heard this astonishing statement from the apostle at second reading. What do these words mean? They seem to be and indeed are a paradox. How could God, who is holiness himself, "make his only begotten Son, who was sent into the world," to sin? And yet we read exactly that in the passage from the second letter of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. We are faced with a mystery: a mystery that is at first sight shattering but clearly written in the divine revelation.

Already in the Old Testament the book of Isaiah speaks of it in the fourth song of the servant of God with an inspired look ahead: "We were all lost like sheep, everyone went his own way. But the Lord charged the guilt of all of us on him «(Isa. 53: 6).

Christ, the Saint, who is completely without sin, agrees to accept our sins. He agrees to redeem us. He agrees to carry the burden of our sins to fulfill the mission he received from the Father, who, as the evangelist John writes, "loved the world so much that he gave his only son to everyone who believes in him [...] has eternal life «(Jn 3:16).

3. Before Christ, who for love has borne the guilt for our evil deeds, we are all invited to a thorough investigation into conscience. A characteristic element of the Great Jubilee is what I call "cleaning the memory" ( Incarnationis mysterium, 11). As Peter's successor, I have asked that "the Church, strengthened by the holiness that it receives from its Lord, kneel before God this year of mercy and ask forgiveness from him for the sins of her children from past and present" (ibid. ). Today's First Sunday of Lent seemed to me the perfect opportunity for the Church, spiritually gathered around Peter's successor, to beg for divine forgiveness for the misconduct of all believers: We forgive and ask for forgiveness!

This call has triggered a deep and fruitful reflection in the ecclesial community, which in the past few days has led to the publication of a document by the International Theological Commission entitled Remembrance and Reconciliation. The Church and past failures. I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the preparation of this text. It is very useful for the correct understanding and implementation of the real forgiveness request. This is based on the objective responsibility that Christians share as members of the mystical body and that urges today's believers, together with their own mistakes, to recognize yesterday's Christians in the light of careful historical and theological clarification. Because »because of that bond, that unites us in the mystical body, we all bear the burden of the errors and guilt of those who have preceded us, even if we have no personal responsibility for it, and do not want to replace the judgment of God, who

knows hearts only. "( IM, 11). Recognizing the aberrations of the past serves to shake our consciences in the face of the compromises of the present and open the way to reconciliation for everyone.

**4.** We forgive and ask for forgiveness! While we praise God, who in his compassionate love has created a wonderful wealth of holiness, missionary zeal, total devotion to Christ and others in the Church, we cannot help but recognize the infidelity towards the gospel, which some of our brothers particularly recognize guilty during the second millennium. We ask for forgiveness for the divisions that have arisen among Christians, for the use of force to which some of them have stepped in serving the truth, and for the attitudes that have sometimes been adopted of mistrust and hostility towards the followers of other religions ,

We confess all the more responsibility as Christians for the evils of today. With regard to atheism, religious indifference, secularism, ethical relativism, violations of the right to life, indifference to poverty in many countries, we have to ask ourselves what our responsibility is.

We humbly ask for forgiveness for the share that each of us has in our behavior in these wickedness and thus helps to disfigure the face of the Church.

As we confess our guilt, we also forgive the misconduct others have committed against us. Throughout history, Christians have suffered harassment, violence and persecution of their faith countless times. Just as the victims have forgiven such attacks, so we forgive. The Church today, as at all times, feels a duty to cleanse the memory of these sad incidents from any feeling of bitterness and revenge. This will make the anniversary an opportunity for everyone to turn deeply into the gospel. From the acceptance of God's forgiveness arises the endeavor for the forgiveness of the brothers and reconciliation with one another.

**5.** But what does the term "reconciliation" express for us? In order to grasp its exact meaning and value, one must first become aware of the possibility of division, of separation. Yes, man is the only creature on earth that can enter into a community relationship with his creator, but also the only one that can separate from him. Unfortunately, he does indeed move away from God very often.

Fortunately, after leaving the father's house and wasting the inheritance received, many go on their own like the prodigal son of Luke's gospel (cf. Lk 15:13). And when they reach the bottom of the abyss, they become aware of what they have lost (cf. Lk 15,13–17). So they set out on the path of repentance: "I want to leave and go to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against you" (Luke 15:18).

God, aptly portrayed by the father in the parable, receives every prodigal son who returns to him. He receives it through Christ. In him the sinner can become "just" again, righteousness of God. He accepts him because he has made his eternal son a sin for us. Yes, only in Christ can we become God's righteousness (cf. 2 Cor 5:21).

**6.** "God loved the world so much that he gave his only son." Here we have summarized the meaning of the mystery of the redemption of the world. One has to be deeply aware of the value of the great gift that the Father gave us in Jesus. Our soul must keep an eye on Christ: the Christ of Getsemani, the flagellated, the crowned with thorns, the Christ carrying the cross and finally the crucified Christ. Christ took on the burden of the sins of all people, the burden of our sins, so that we would be reconciled to God through his redemption offering.

Saul of Tarsus, who became the apostle Paul, comes before us today as a witness: He experienced the power of the cross in a unique way on the road to Damascus. The resurrected man revealed himself in all his radiant power: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? [...] Who are you, sir? [...] I am Jesus whom you are persecuting «(Acts 9: 4-5). Paul, who experienced the power of the cross of Christ in such a strong way, turns to us today with an urgent request: "We [exhort] you that you will not receive his grace in vain." And Paul attaches great importance to this grace is given by God, who says to us today: "At the time of grace I hear you, on the day of salvation I help you" (2 Cor 6: 1-2).

Mary, mother of forgiveness, help us to accept the grace of forgiveness that the jubilee provides us with! Make the Lent of this extraordinary Holy Year be a time of grace, a time of reconciliation, a time of salvation for all believers and for everyone who seeks God!

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Category :

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